

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 to 12. (CANCELLED)

13. (NEW) An instrument for manual use in a root canal procedure on a tooth, which comprises:

a metallic needle part for working the tooth, the needle part having a proximal end and a distal end, and

a gripping member surrounding and attached to the proximal end of the needle part to serve as a handle to be gripped by fingers of an operator, the gripping member having a substantially continuous outer surface,

wherein material forming the outer surface of the gripping member has a coefficient of friction higher than 0.4, determined as a coefficient of kinetic friction and with steel as a material pair, and wherein the material of the outer surface of the gripping member has a hardness and a thickness such that the gripping member is recoverably deformable by force applied by the fingers of the operator.

14. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 13, wherein the coefficient of friction of the material forming the outer surface of the gripping member is in the range of from about 0.5 to about 0.8.

15. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 14, wherein the coefficient of friction of the material forming the outer surface of the gripping member is in the range of from about 0.7 to about 0.8.

16. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 13, wherein the gripping member comprises homogeneous material.
17. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 13, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 10 to about 95 Shore A.
18. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 17, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 30 to about 95 Shore A.
19. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 18, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 50 to about 85 Shore A.
20. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 19, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 60 to about 70 Shore A.
21. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 13, wherein the gripping member comprises at least one layer of some other material beneath the outer surface layer.
22. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 21, wherein the outer surface layer is thin and has a hardness lower than the hardness of the at least one other layer.
23. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 21, wherein the outer surface of the gripping member has a hardness lower than the hardness of the at least one other layer by from about 5 to about 10 units Shore A.

24. (NEW) An instrument for manual use in a root canal procedure on a tooth, which comprises:

a metallic needle part for working the tooth, the needle part having a proximal end and a distal end, and

a gripping member surrounding and attached to the proximal end of the needle part to serve as a handle to be gripped by fingers of an operator, the gripping member having a substantially continuous outer surface,

wherein material forming the outer surface of the gripping member has a coefficient of friction greater than 0.4, determined as a coefficient of kinetic friction and with steel as a material pair, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 10 to about 95 Shore A, wherein the material of the outer surface of the gripping member has a hardness and a thickness such that the gripping member is recoverably deformable by force applied by the fingers of the operator, and wherein the instrument is suitable for manual use in a root canal procedure wherein fatigue in the operator's fingers is reduced or eliminated.

25. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 24, wherein the coefficient of friction of the material forming the outer surface of the gripping member is in the range of from about 0.5 to about 0.8.

26. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 24, wherein the gripping member comprises homogeneous material.

27. (NEW) An instrument according to claim 24, wherein the material of at least the outer surface of the gripping member comprises an elastomer having a hardness in the range of from about 60 to about 70 Shore A.